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ABSTRACT

The social context within which home schooling takes place is described, and the ideological frameworks and contexts within which parents (most of them fundamentalist Christians) make schooling decisions are examined. Research involved participant observation and interviews with 16 home schooling families (13 families self-labeled "conservative Christians") and various educators for 18 months. Results show that parents' beliefs fall into either of two categories--"ideologues" or "pedagogues." Ideological parents, when discussing the need for home schooling, frame their argument to educators as one of whether parents or public officials should determine what children are taught when the two parties disagree over fundamental issues. Pedagogical parents intend to teach their children essentially what schools would teach, but want learning apart from the bureaucratized institution. Educators claim that schools should protect children from their parents' provincialism, but this argument is speculative. Few schools are genuinely pluralistic and few seem successful at teaching much more than facts. The conflict between home schoolers and supporters of traditional education is essentially a principled power struggle between parents and schools. Study results demonstrate that home schooling is not merely an educational problem; the solutions usually recommended address not only parents' broader concerns but also the weaknesses of public education made explicit by the home schooling controversy. (CJH)

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Home Schooling in Context

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While the issue of home schooling receives continued attention in the courts, in state legislatures, and in the popular press, only limited research on home education has been reported in the professional literature. The few studies on home education have generally been limited to demographic studies of home schooling families (e.g. Gustavsen, 1980) or to case studies of the daily routines of individual home schools (e.g. Williams, Arnoldsen, and Reynolds, 1984). While these studies offer valuable information about who is home schooling and how they are doing it, there is little information available from these authors about the social context within which home schooling takes place.

This study described in this paper represents an attempt to begin to fill this void. The goal of the study was to document the values and beliefs of parents who chose to teach their children at home and to analyze the social context within which those values and beliefs are created and maintained.

The Study. The study involved participant observation at state, regional, and local meetings of home schoolers in a state in the southeast over a period of eighteen months. I met most often with Central Christian Academy, an affiliation of fifteen to twenty families in one of the state's larger cities. I also periodically met with a second local group that was organizing in a nearby community.

I accompanied home schoolers from across the state as they met with representatives from other education groups to discuss legislation, as they conducted informational meetings in which they

explained home schooling to others, and as they attended public functions at which educational or other family concerns were discussed.

I conducted interviews with a total of 23 parents from 16 home schooling families. The children in half of these families had never attended school; children from the remaining families had been withdrawn from public or private schools. Thirteen of these families described themselves as conservative Christians, and the other three families had no religious affiliation. All the interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim.

I conducted ten additional interviews with state and local education officials and others who were involved with monitoring or regulating home schooling in the state. Included in this series of interviews were several meetings with the president and other officers of the state home schooling organization. Additionally, I interviewed both individuals who directed the Governor's Office of Non-Public Education (the state agency responsible for monitoring home schooling in the state) during the course of my study. I also interviewed the assistant state attorney general who had prosecuted several of the home schooling cases that had reached appeals court and a lawyer who had defended several parents who were taken to court. Finally, I interviewed representatives from several public education lobbying groups about their organization's perceptions of home schooling. All of these interviews were also audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

I collected and analyzed a variety of documents. I read approximately 5 years of back issues of two nationally circulated

home-schooling newsletters: *Growing without Schooling* edited by the late John Holt, and *The Home Educator and Family Report* edited by Raymond and Dorothy Moore. I also received the newsletters of the state organization and information packets that the state group provided for parents to give to legislators when lobbying. I subscribed to the newsletter issued by Christian Liberty Academy, a popular supplier of home-schooling curriculum materials. I read approximately 15 books on home schooling or more general educational issues recommended in these newsletters or by the parents I met. I monitored press reports of home schooling in the state and received newsletters from several education lobbying groups that I expected would take a stand on home education if the issue reached the legislature. I also reviewed the files of a lawyer who had defended several home schooling families that had been taken to court.

From this data, I categorized and analyzed the home schoolers' shared beliefs, practices, and interpretations of events and experiences. In this paper, I will discuss only one element of this analysis. Specifically, the paper examines the broad ideological frameworks within which parents make their decisions about home education.

Results

Although parents decide to teach their own children for a variety of reasons, the values and beliefs of these parents fall broadly into two categories. For the purposes of this analysis, I have categorized these parents as either "Ideologues" or "Pedagogues."

These categories are by no means mutually exclusive.

Categorization of the parents within either group , however, is based upon the rhetoric that the parents use to explain why they are home schooling and upon the values and beliefs implicit in the parents' descriptions of their relationships with their children and their structuring of their children's education. While these clean distinctions between types of parents who teach their own children are contrived, I hope that in discussing each "category" of parent separately I will be better able to portray the diversity that characterizes the home schooling movement.

The Ideologues

The Ideologues explain that they are home schooling for two reasons: they object to what they believe is being taught in public and private schools and they seek to strengthen their relationships with their children. These parents have specific values, beliefs and skills that they want their children to learn, and they do not believe that these things are being adequately taught in any available school. Beyond traditional subject matter, the parents want their children to learn fundamentalist religious doctrine and a conservative political and social perspective. Not incidentally, they also want their children to learn (both intellectually and affectively) that the family is the most important institution in society.

The decision to home school, then, serves these parents in two ways: first they can teach their children what they as parents want them to learn without risking that the children will be swayed by competing ideas or beliefs. And, in bringing the children home to learn, the parents graphically demonstrate to their children that the family is, indeed, a vital social institution.

The values and beliefs of the Ideologues: A closer look

The Ideological home schoolers are almost exclusively Christian fundamentalists (although not all Christian fundamentalists in the study are "Ideologues"). While the parents in this study share the same core religious beliefs with other fundamentalists, of greater interest for this study are the points of departure between the small number of fundamentalists who teach their own children and the much larger number who do not. These differences are largely over interpretation of scriptures that discuss the responsibility of parents for their children.

"Parent responsibility." With other fundamentalists, the home schooling parents take seriously their responsibilities for their children's spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical well-being. Unlike other fundamentalist parents, however, the home-schooling parents believe that sending their children to school to be taught by someone else would be compromising their parental responsibilities.

The parents view this responsibility for teaching their own children as a biblical mandate, the moral equivalent of other obligations outlined in scripture. They base these beliefs on several Biblical passages that were often quoted or explained at meetings of Christian home schoolers. An example of this teaching is found in an excerpt from my field notes that describe a talk given by a father at a meeting of Central Christian Academy parents:

Eddie opened his Bible and said that he would now look at what scripture said about education. He read first from Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "These commandments that I give you

today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." After reading this, he said, "This plainly teaches that the parents are to teach their children. This is given in the context of the law. I know that sometimes people take a part of the Old Testament and say that the New Testament has fulfilled it, but this is given in the context of the commandments, and I'm sure that most of you know that the commandments were not done away with in the New Testament. It is an order that God has established, a method for instructing. It doesn't say that they are to be taught from the state or a certified teacher or even a Christian school. ... This is God's word. It is eternal, inerrant, and binding." ... He then read from Ephesians 6: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." He said, "This is the same concept. This is a principle that God has established." He added, "I know some of you aren't going to like this, but this is God's word."

While other Christians sharing many of the same doctrinal beliefs as the home-schooling parents do not interpret these passages to mean that they are obligated to teach their own children at home, this father and many of the other parents in the state's home-schooling organizations believe that scripture clearly mandates that children be taught at home.

Defining home schooling as an obligation or as a responsibility suggests that parents may feel that they have no choice but to teach their own children regardless of their feelings on the issue. While most of the parents reported that they very willingly decided to home school, a small number admitted that they began teaching their children somewhat reluctantly. As one of these mothers explained:

Since she's come home, and I've made the decision to take the responsibility --and it wasn't all willing either --I felt responsible and I wasn't sure I liked feeling responsible, but I was knowledgeable now about the situation so I didn't have an excuse. I could either say I wasn't going to do anything and just go on, or do something. So in the process of just going on and doing something and not being so concerned about how I felt about it, I found it started changing me.

While parents were frequently reminded of their "responsibility" to teach their children at formal and informal meetings, few parents admitted, as this mother had, that they had begun home schooling reluctantly. Instead, the parents explain that doing what God expects of them brings great satisfaction.

God's Intervention. The Ideological parents believe that God has personally called them to teach their children. During conversations with each other and during interviews, they would recount how God had guided them to their decision to home school. This guidance comes in several forms: both through the arrangement of circumstances and through God's directing the parents' thoughts and emotions toward home schooling.

The parents interpret a variety of circumstances as evidence that God wants them to home school. For one mother, a change in the attitude of her daughter was seen as evidence of God's intervention:

We could really see the Lord's direction. We know it's the Lord's will. At first our daughter was very much against leaving school, but by the next morning, she thought it wouldn't be such a bad idea. This confirmed for us that this was really His will, that she would come around that way overnight.

For another mother, the negative reaction of her non-Christian mother was similarly interpreted.

When we were talking about Christian schools, I had a discussion with my mother. She just really got down on me for teaching him Christian things and that really drove me. I was just determined. And that was, I think, the Lord's way of making up my mind.

The circumstances leading to the decision to home school are usually unique to each family, but the parents uniformly interpret such diverse circumstances as evidence of divine guidance.

In other instances, the decision to home school is confirmed not only by circumstances, but also by the parents experiencing a compelling sense that they are personally being directed to teach their own children. They believe that persistent thoughts about home education or positive thoughts about the idea of teaching their children at home are God's way of convincing them of what He

wants. Several parents explained:

I really felt led the whole last half of last year that we should go toward home schooling. My wife was hesitant and frightened in the beginning, but I really felt that that was the Lord's direction for the kids for this year.

Our conviction is from the Lord that she is to stay home.

The parents not only believe that God leads them to home school; they also believe that God intervenes in their ongoing work with their children. For some, this intervention is experienced as a sense of God's approval for what they are doing. One mother explained:

I'm taking the responsibility that God has placed me with. I'm running in line with his will for what he wants for me, and that puts you in a position of a lot of peace. That's very satisfying.

Many of the parents also described specific circumstances that demonstrate for them God's intervention in their work with their children. Several couples explained that God had provided the financial resources they needed to teach their children at home:

God has really confirmed our decision by providing for us so well. Even when we're really scraping bottom, there's enough money for our school supplies.

The parents also often explained that God had enabled them to teach difficult subject matter, even though they, themselves, did not feel qualified to do so. Several parents explained:

If God has established us to be educators, then he'll enable us also. If you make a commitment, the Lord will equip you with the knowledge, the time, and working out your schedule.

Anything the Lord wants you to do, he will enable you to do it. You may not ever have the power before or after to ever do it again, but for the time, you will be able to do it. There were a number of times when we saw that happen, (laughing) such as some of those unusual situations with our math.

The parents also spoke more broadly about God's guidance and direction. Many of the mothers and fathers insisted during interviews that God was ultimately responsible for what their children learned. In their words:

I have to accept that you can only do so much and then you have to allow the Lord to work out some of these things.

I realize that there's only so much a parent can do. I'm not expecting miracles, I just want to do my part as a parent and fulfill my responsibilities, and trust the Lord to take care of them. He knows what's going on.

For these parents, home schooling is inseparable from their

Christian faith. Not only do they believe that God requires them to teach their children at home; their belief that God is personally involved in their home schools also provides the support, encouragement and guidance for managing their work with their children. In these families, home education is not simply a pedagogical preference; it is also a spiritual exercise in obedience to and reliance upon God.

The Ideologues view of opposition to home education.

Additional insight into the values and beliefs of the Ideologues can be gained by analyzing their reactions to opposition to home education. This opposition is taken seriously among the Ideologues. Believing home schooling to be an exercise of their Christian faith, the parents also believe that efforts to curtail their freedom to teach their own children represent more serious effort to restrict religious freedom and violations of the family privacy.

Many of the Ideologues believe that they, collectively and individually, have been targeted by formidable opponents who are out to supplant Christian virtue with secular, humanistic, moral relativity. They argue that this conflict is played out in the media, legislatures, and in the courts, but they believe strongly that a major field for this battle between good and evil is public education. In the eyes of the parents and the authors they read, the primary goal of professional educators is not the teaching of academic subjects but the preaching of the religion of Secular Humanism. Given this interpretation of the "real" purpose of public education, the responsibility the Ideologues feel for teaching their own children takes on new significance.

Warnings of the impending threat of Secular Humanism abound in the materials read by the Ideologues. Schlafly (1984, p. 12), for example warns parents that "children learn in school to be "sexually active", take illegal drugs, repudiate their parents, and rationalize immoral and anti-social conduct when it "feels" good in a particular "situation." (p.12)

Similarly, in editorial appearing in a newsletter for home-schooling parents published by Christian Liberty Academy (a correspondence school through which many of the Ideological parents receive technical support and curricular materials) warned home-schooling parents of the *real* purpose of public schools:

I think more Christians need to be aware that the educational systems of the world today are "hot houses" - places where a carefully maintained atmosphere of materialism, humanism, evolution, relativism, and sometimes downright atheism is deliberately created for the impressionable student. (Lindstrom, 1985, p. 2)

In these and numerous other publications (c.f. Blumenfeld, 1984; Cumbey, 1983; McGraw, 1976; Morris, 1979; Schlafly, 1984) public, and sometimes private schools are portrayed as dangerous and evil institutions serving insidious purposes.

The parents often informally discussed the dangers of public schools, and the perceived erosion of "traditional" values was also the topic of several formal talks at home schooling meetings. At a state-wide meeting in November of 1984, a lawyer who has been involved in many conservative political issues in the state defined home schooling as "Judeo-Christian resistance" to the growing

threats of secularism and statism. His speech, which drew a standing ovation, portrayed the assembled parents as "the supreme threat" to "the race of conditioners" now engaged in "an almost cosmic struggle" for domination of public thought. He then elaborated further on the motives of public educators:

Fifty years ago, John Dewey made clear how all encompassing he understood his humanistic philosophy to be: "Here," wrote Dewey, "are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race."

And Dewey, who is commonly referred to as the father of public education, was not content to allow this secular religion to evolve on its own. Rather, Dewey urged, the goal of educators was "To make it explicit and militant".

Onward secular soldiers, marching as to war. And you, dear friends who wish only to fulfill your responsibilities to guide the moral, the religious, and character development of your children, are in the enemy camp. And that is why home schooling is really, in essence, a means of resistance to the radical secularism and moral relativism -- not to mention the mediocrity -- which have captured educational philosophy, and which motivates, or blinds, so much of the leadership elite in our society.

This speaker concluded his talk with the prediction that home schoolers would certainly be prosecuted and imprisoned if they did not persevere against the "current anti-religious, relativistic

trends."

This belief that the parents and their children are in real danger is evident in the following excerpt from my field notes, which describes an incident that took place at a Central Christian Academy meeting in the winter of 1985:

I was sitting some distance away when I overheard Mary and William telling John how far they had gotten with their scripture memorization. Since I knew that it was not unusual for Christians to memorize portions of the Bible for devotional purposes, I wasn't paying much attention until I heard them talking about Christians they had read about that had been jailed in concentration camps in Russia and Germany without their Bibles. It became apparent during this conversation that this couples was attempting to memorize extensive passages against the possibility that they would someday be jailed without access to their Bibles. A short time later, William and John came over to me and I commented on how ambitious it was to memorize so much scripture. It was at this point that they told me that I should read the Cumbeys book, since their state was one of the key states targeted for infiltration by the New Age Movement[a broad term used by the Ideologues to describe various aspects of Secular Humanism.] They explained further that the governor's education programs and his "Global 2000" planning commission were evidence that the

movement had infiltrated.

Faced with such pervasive danger and such an interpretation of the functions of public schooling, the Ideologues view their families and their home schools as a last defense against the impending destruction of "traditional" values and beliefs.

Summary and implications: The Ideologues. The parents who teach their own children primarily as a means of counteracting the unacceptable teachings of schools believe that they are fulfilling God's general plan for Christian parents and His specific plans for their families. The wisdom of this plan is evident to the parents as they see public institutions and public thought becoming more insulated from the influence of Christians like themselves.

This ideology has implications not only for how the parents shape their children's education but also for how the families negotiate their status in a society that highly values traditional schooling. In claiming that they have personally been called by God to teach their children at home, the parents leave little room for negotiations with those who would seek to restrict or regulate home education. Furthermore, the parents believe that their qualifications to teach their children cannot be challenged since God Himself has appointed them as teachers. Finally, opposition to unregulated home schooling is interpreted as evidence of the plot to undermine the family and Christianity. Conflicts between home schoolers and their opponents therefore not only demonstrate to the parents the fundamental differences in the beliefs between the families and traditional educators but also makes clear to the parents the

urgency of maintaining those differences.

The Pedagogues

The second broad category of home schoolers in this study includes parents who teach their own children primarily for pedagogical reasons. Their criticisms of the schools are not so much that the schools teach heresy, but that schools teach whatever they teach ineptly. These parents generally come to their decision to home school with a broader perspective on learning - they have professional training in education, they have close friends or relatives who are educators, they have read about education or child development, or they are involved with organizations that speak to issues of childrearing.

In contrast to the more tightly-developed belief systems of the Ideologues, the values and beliefs of the Pedagogues are more diverse. Not being united by any particular religious persuasion, these parents are likely to share little in common beyond their views on learning. While there are Christian fundamentalists among the parents I have categorized as Pedagogues, beliefs about child development and learning shape the interaction between these parents with their children more than do their religious beliefs. In spite of their diverse backgrounds, however, several common themes do emerge from the Pedagogues' descriptions of their lives and their work with their children. These parents are highly independent and strive to take "responsibility" for their own lives. They share a respect for their children's intellect and creativity. Finally, they share a perspective on home education that differs

markedly from that of the Ideologues.

Independence and responsibility. One of the most noteworthy and most obvious characteristics of Pedagogical parents is the value they place on personal independence. This independence is manifested in different ways in different families: in some families, the babies are born at home; other families raise much of their own food; several of the Pedagogical fathers are self-employed craftsmen, and others ran their own businesses. Several of the Christian families in this group belonged to small, non-denominational, loosely organized fellowship rather than to established churches. Home schooling in these families is a powerful symbol of their independence from other social institutions.

The Pedagogues speak of their independence as "being responsible" for their own lives. As one mother explained:

As a parent, I had relinquished all responsibility for learning to authorities. You don't heal yourself, you go to a doctor. You don't learn yourself, you go to someone with a degree and the proper qualifications, so I didn't have the sense that what I was doing with my son involved a learning process. Now I have a very different perspective.

These parents are home schooling because they actively question the professionalization and bureaucratization of modern society, and particularly of modern education. Their decision to home school is a public declaration deliberately-uncredentialed competence to raise their children without institutional support. They do not speak of *accepting* their responsibility for their

children's education as do the Ideologues. Instead, they speak of *taking* responsibility for their lives by assuming tasks usually performed by large and bureaucratic social institutions such as schools.

Perspectives on learning. One of the strongest common threads uniting the Pedagogues is the parents' belief that their children will learn more naturally and more completely apart from traditional schooling. The Pedagogues often explain their decision to home school by explaining their beliefs about learning:

It's not a perfect way, but for what is available at this point in society, it allows a child to develop himself more authentically than a school system does.

I really think that the individual is created in such a way as to want to grow naturally. That to remove blocks [to learning] is the thing, rather than to build something specifically and impose that view on them. They [children] are builders, too.

The best thing is not to stifle the creativity that children are born with, their wonderful imaginations. I think that's the very main thing. If my son can maintain his creativity and his vivaciousness for learning, it's worth it.

The methods these parents employ for teaching their children reflect their faith in their children's innate curiosity and creativity. In contrast to the Ideologues who structure their teaching almost

entirely around textbooks and workbooks, the Pedagogues are more likely to encourage their children to pursue their own projects and to work at their own pace using resources that are available in the home or the surrounding community. The parents value active, informal learning that is stimulated by the interests and experiences of their children.

The Pedagogues' beliefs about learning and child development are further illustrated by their appraisal of other home schoolers. In interviews, the Pedagogues often criticized Ideological home schoolers for being too structured in their teaching and too strict in their discipline. The criticisms of other home schoolers voiced by one father (himself a fundamentalist Christian) illustrate this:

A lot of these [home schooling] families are heavily into obedience. And kids need to question. They need to know that there's some kind of balance there, or they are going to reject it and go off on a tangent somewhere, unless they can understand your reasons for not wanting them to do something. There's a place for them to know that you are the authority as a parent, and you have a responsibility to take care of them, and they need to obey you, but sometimes, it goes overboard.

The Pedagogues also criticized other home schoolers being too structured in their work with their children. In one interview a father expressed his dismay at other home schoolers in his city:

If you really do home schooling, you have to let go not only of the physical school, but the school inside your head,

too. That often does not happen. The whole school mindset is just transported from the classroom down the street to your kitchen table. Then what you gain from it is greatly minimized.... When that's done, the parents get wrapped up in achievement, and they say, "My kid's 15 months old and doing algebra." It's really out of sync. It's just out of sync.

For the Pegagogues, the key to home education is not where the children learn or even what they learn. The Pedagogues chose home schooling at home because they believe that it offers their naturally curious and creative children the best possible environment for learning.

Public stances. When the Ideologues frame the issue of home education in arguments over religious freedom and family privacy, the decision to teach their own children becomes an explicitly political act. Pedagogical parents are more likely to view home education as simply a personal statement of their beliefs about learning. Consequently, the Pedagogues are less likely to affiliate with local or state home schooling lobbying and support groups. As several Pedagogical mothers explained, they felt little in common with more politically-oriented home schoolers:

I feel like it's great that there's a state organization, but it's still got to remain personal. Sometimes, people can get out of hand with it - everything has to be like a cause, and I'm not like that. I feel that if it's something you decide to do, well, that's great We'd just as soon never go to a meeting or never meet with other families unless it seemed like our son was feeling like he was really out of the ordinary

or something. There are people who are just gung-ho into making it a real movement, and it's just a home thing for us.

I don't teach home schooling. I don't advise people to do home schooling. I just say, that existentially, I've found that this works in this particular situation at this particular time. My approach is quite different from people who are gung-ho home schooling.

The Pedagogical parents are also less likely to fear harassment from school officials. Differences with the Ideologues are illustrated by the reactions of parents when they or their children are challenged by neighbors, strangers, or school officials about why the children are not in school. In Pedagogical families, these incidents often became the subject of a family joke. (An example is the laughter of a mother and father during an interview as they recounted how the police had brought their sons home twice from a shopping center where they sometimes went during the day to get supplies for projects.) Ideological families often reacted to even casual inquiries about their home schools by keeping their children in the house behind drawn drapes during the school day.

Ideological parents repeatedly described the inevitable inquiries from school officials about why their children were not in schools as harassment and evidence of hostility that public educators feel toward home schoolers. Pedagogues attributed similar encounters to bureaucratic inflexibility and the ignorance of school officials. In

sum, the Ideologues pattern their home schools closely after traditional schools, but they are highly suspicious of the motives of school officials and vehemently resist any regulation of home education. The Pedagogues strive to provide an educational environment for their children that is distinctively different from school while they dismiss opposition from public educators with an almost patronizing indifference.

Conclusions

The Ideological parents feel that God personally requires them to teach their own children, and with this responsibility comes the added burden of vigilant resistance to public institutions seemingly set on undermining the family and the Christian faith.

Pedagogical parents undertake home education more voluntarily. They chose home schooling because they believe that their children will learn better on their own than they would in formal classrooms. While these parents may also believe that public schools are ungodly, the Pedagogues are more immediately motivated by their goals of creating a nurturing and stimulating educational environment for their children. They are confident in their abilities to manage their children's education, and they are confident in their children's capacity for learning and growing apart from the traditional trappings of school.

These two groups of home schoolers raise two very different issues for education policy makers. The Ideologues argue (often loudly and strongly) that parents have the fundamental right to teach their children their most sacredly-held values and beliefs, regardless of whether their teachings strike others as a narrow or

even distorted view of the world. The Ideologues' argument with the schools is essentially whether parents or public officials should determine what children will be taught when the two parties disagree over very fundamental issues. The home schoolers are not the first to raise this argument, but they are currently among the most zealous champions of the right of parents to dissent from what is being taught in public schools.

The Pedagogues, on the other hand, intend to teach their children essentially what the schools would teach them, but they want their children to learn apart from the formalized, bureaucratized institution of schooling. Their argument with the schools is not so much over what their children will learn but *how* they will learn it.

In response to the Ideologues, educators often claim that schools have an obligation to protect children from the provincialism of their parents. These arguments are, however, speculative. We do not yet know whether the parents of children raised in an age of electronic communication can significantly restrict their children's knowledge of the world; we are even less certain whether schools can significantly broaden children's empathy for persons who are not like themselves. Their own education in public schools did not, after all, protect the Ideological parents from accepting the values and beliefs their opponents label as narrow or distorted. Few schools are genuinely pluralistic, and few schools seem to be successful at teaching children much beyond isolated and inconsequential "facts". In the absence of evidence of harm, the conflict between home schoolers and supporters of traditional education seems to be

essentially a principled power struggle between parents and schools. There are seldom clear winners in such conflicts.

The issues raised by the Pedagogues are much easier to address. State legislatures and education officials across the country have responded to the growth in home education with proposals for tighter regulation of home education. In essence, challenges to bureaucratic education are met with greater bureaucratic control. Procedural questions then take precedence over the more substantive issues raised by the parents. In the state in which this study took place, for example, there has been endless debate over who should give the standardized tests that home-schooled children are required to take. The Pedagogical parents' arguments that these tests cannot measure what their children are learning are lost in the din.

As Tyack and Hansot (1981) have argued, Americans have no ideology that justifies conflict in public education. Consequently, when controversial issues such as home education do arise, the only recourse available to educators is to redefine the issue as an educational problem. As this study demonstrates, home schooling is not merely an educational problem, and the educational solutions usually recommended to manage home schooling fail to address not only the broader concerns of these parents, but also the weaknesses of public education made explicit by the home schooling controversy. Both the parents and the schools would be better served by a more serious examination of the complex issues raised by these parents.

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